



# Employee News

Governor M. Jodi Rell

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

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**Safety Expects the Unexpected**

## *Focus on Hurricane Preparedness*

The Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) is committed to providing a safe environment for our consumers and our staff. To ensure safety is to be prepared for the unexpected.

Hurricane Season is now upon us, and here in Connecticut the threat of a major storm hitting our shores is a reality that we might have to face.

In collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS), DMR is working to promote awareness and preparedness in the event a hurricane hits the

state.

“Our goal is to make sure our consumers, our staff and their families are prepared,” said Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara. “We can save lives if we all work together on effective planning.”

## **Hurricane WATCH- Hurricane WARNING**

When a Hurricane **WATCH** or **WARNING** is issued, quite often people are confused as to what it means and what they should do.

### *What is a Hurricane WATCH?*

When a Hurricane **WATCH** is issued by the National Weather Service it means that hurricane conditions are **POSSIBLE** in a specific area over the next 36 hours.

### *What to do when a WATCH is issued?*

People in the affected areas should tune in to local radio and TV stations for up-to-date storm information.

### *What is a Hurricane WARNING?*

When a Hurricane **WARNING** is issued, Hurricane conditions are **EXPECTED** in the specified area usually in the next 24 hours.

### *What to do when a WARNING is issued?*

People in the affected areas should be prepared to evacuate to their pre-determined relocation site or local shelters if public officials say to do so.

## BE PREPARED

The Department of Mental Retardation Emergency Management Team wants to ensure that the homes of the individuals we serve are prepared for all emergencies. It is recommended that before the “storm” hits, the following emergency supports are updated and readily available.

1. **SUPPLIES** –At least a three to seven day supply of water, food, medication, and a flashlight and extra batteries. It’s important to consider that after a hurricane passes, it may be difficult to get water and other supplies for several days, roads may be impassable, and telephone, cell towers, and electrical power lines may be down.
2. **COMMUNICATION**– Have a working battery operated radio with extra batteries to ensure receiving updated information.
3. **POWER**– If a generator is available, make sure you know how to use it, test it to make sure it works properly, know what devices the generator will operate. Finally, make sure there is an adequate supply of fuel available and it is safely stored.

## LISTEN, IT COULD BE IMPORTANT!

Three to four days in advance of a hurricane, the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security in conjunction with DMR, may advise an evacuation of people with “special needs” from low lying areas that are subject to storm surge or flooding effects.

*Citizen advisories will be communicated via local radio or TV stations.*

## KNOW THE EVACUATION PLAN

An Evacuation Plan only works, if you review it, understand it and are able to change it if the need arises. Weather Services can only predict where a storm might make landfall and that’s why understanding and being prepared for last minute changes can make a difference.

Review existing evacuation plans. Remember to identify items you will need to take with you including medications and maps to help identify alternate travel routes in case roads are closed. Ensure relocation sites are not in low lying areas subject to storm surge or flooding effects. Given the anticipated track of the hurricane, some DMR Relocation Sites noted in the **DMR Special Operations Plan for Emergency Relocation** may not be available for use. You may be informed which DMR Relocation Sites are available for occupancy, and any other special instructions, via citizen advisories and/or through direct communication from DMR.

The best way to handle an emergency is to monitor your local emergency radio and TV stations and follow your local officials directions. In some cases, you may be directed to a specific shelter that is other than the sites identified in your **DMR Special Operations Plan for Emergency Relocation**.

## Continuity of Service

Continuity of Service depends on taking into consideration our minimum safe staffing requirements in a home or at a shelter during a hurricane event. Be aware that extended duty may be necessary. Your employer needs to know your personal considerations that would prevent or enable you from working during an emergency.

# BE AWARE BE SAFE